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Misfits Build New Life in Guyana

SAN FRANCISCO—A church which lives by the words of Matthew 25 is rehabilitating more than 100 Bay Area incorrigibles and misfits on a tropical farm in South America.

To paraphrase Matthew the hungry were fed, the thirsty given drink, the naked clothed, the sick and imprisoned visited.

The people helped range from drug addicts to child-molesters, kleptomaniacs to deviants of almost any stripe.

The farm, however, was not undertaken for sociological reasons, but to help feed the natives of the Caribbean nation of Guyana.

Guyana is a former British colony which received its independence in 1966. The problem then became how to feed, clothe and house its growing population.

Pastor Jim Jones of Peoples Temple (Disciples of Christ), 1859 Geary St., tries to live by the message of Matthew. For example the the San Francisco operation feeds 1,800 people a day, gives medical treatment to 50 to 80 seniors daily, offers free legal services, and craft training to persons seeking work.

In helping the Guyanese, the extra benefit was seeking to help city youth with serious antisocial behavior problems. They are now busy with animal husbandry, livestock management, construction, mechanics, and the obvious first calling, farming.

The farm consists of several thousand acres being transformed from virgin jungle to lush agriculture and pasture land. Some 200 varieties of vegetables, fruits and nuts are being cultivated. Cattle, chickens and pigs are being raised.

The human crop—the rehabilitated—is even more diverse. The Rev. Mr. Jones felt it was worthwhile to try to break the vicious cycle of ex-convicts going back to prison.

"The setting of despair, violence and poverty that characterizes the inner city is the culprit," he said. "It is time for society to develop alternatives such as cooperative communities where young people have a chance to develop their talents."

The former hookers, thieves and dopers receive training, worthwhile jobs, and most important, a sense of accomplishment. Life there is kibbutz-style. The transplanted Bay Area misfits live in cottages and eat in a mess hall they built themselves from trees they felled to make room for crops.

An exhibit of the church and its works is scheduduled tomorrow afternoon at 1859 Geary St.

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